

Barbara Frederick

Q&A



An unretouched photo of Barbara. (Courtesy of Barbara Frederick)

SAMUEL CLEMENS

Barbara Frederick isn't a household name, but she had as much talent as many of Hollywood's leading stars. Born in Chicago, as Barbara Diane Fredrickson, she acted in several stage productions in high school. In Hollywood she won a bevy of titles, including Queen of the Clam Festival and Queen of the Home Show. She was seen in films such as *Imitation of Life* (1959), *The Beat Generation* (1959), and *Lover Come Back* (1961), while also dancing alongside some of the greatest dancers like Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse. She regularly appeared in nightclubs, and was a spokesmodel for Pepsi-Cola. On February 6, 1960, she married Bing Crosby's son Lindsay in Westwood, California, officially becoming one of the alumni of Crosby Wives. She hasn't been onscreen in decades, but she has lived an active life surrounded by family, and friends. Following the mistake of her earlier marriage to Lindsay, she now is blessed with a devoted husband.

Samuel Clemens: How did you get your start in the industry?

Barbara Frederick: I started dancing when I was seven years old. When I was a teenager, I wanted to dance in something at the Illinois State Fair. I had to lie about my age. My father was fine with it, but my mother was frantic. I liked it so much that I wanted to continue with it. I flew to California in 1956 and I studied for a year at the Pasadena Playhouse with Jeff Corey. I was eventually hired as a dancer at the Desert Inn [in Las Vegas], and later the Moulin Rouge [in West Las Vegas].

SC: Any interesting stories about the Desert Inn?

Barbara Frederick: I was grateful to have been hired there. It paid the bills, and I was there for months. I actually met Frank Sinatra there. It's an interesting story. I had finished a rehearsal where I wore this orange-colored leather coat when he approached me saying, "Hello, pumpkin," referring to my coat. It was so corny. He invited me and a few of the other dancers to his act. He even said that he'd sing whatever song I wanted. I sat through that. As I was ready to leave, one of his bodyguards said, "Frank wants you to join him for dinner in his hotel room." I told him, knowing that I was supposed to be the dessert, that I appreciated the offer, but I wasn't ready for that. He looked stunned, saying, "Do you really expect me to give him this news?" I suppose I was one of the few women to reject Frank Sinatra. I later ran into him again on the set of *Sergeants 3* (1962), which he and my then-husband Lindsay were in. Lindsay said to Frank, "I'd like you to meet my wife, Barbara. Frank then took my hand and said, 'We know each other well.'" Lindsay later asked me if I slept



with him, which I assured him I didn't.

SC: How about the Moulin Rouge?

Barbara Frederick: It opened a lot of doors for me. The press billed me as one of Tony Martin's protégées. In fact, the reason I was in *Imitation of Life* was because a scene was filmed at the Moulin Rouge while we were in the middle of a performance. It was a great nightclub for anyone wanting to be an actress because you could audition for things during the day and get to work by nightfall.

SC: As Diane Frederick, you did *Startime* with Cyd Charisse. How did you get that role?

Barbara Frederick: Tony Martin, who I regularly worked with at the Moulin Rouge, cast me and this other dancer he worked with. I wish that I had a copy of that, but I haven't been able to find it.

SC: You appeared in *Sea Hunt* with Lloyd Bridges as Noreen Carr, who suffers life-threatening injuries while surfing. You even shared an onscreen kiss with Bridges.

Barbara Frederick: That was probably the best part I had in my career. I got to do a lot of acting, and I got a lot of airtime. That was the last time I did acting professionally, so it was good to leave on a high note.

SC: Other than *Startime* and *Sea Hunt*, what other television series did you do?

Barbara Frederick: I was a cheerleader on *Matinee Theater*, I was a Hawaiian on *The Thin Man*, I was a dancer on *An Evening with Fred Astaire*, and I was a secretary on *Steve Canyon*. I did several episodes of *The Jimmy Durante Show* and *The George Jessel Show*. There were a lot of opportunities for dancers, so I always had something to keep me working if I didn't get an acting part.

SC: You appeared in *Lover Come Back* with



Barbara Frederick and Rock Hudson posing on set of *Love Come Back* (1961).

Rock Hudson and Doris Day. How were you cast in that role?

Barbara Frederick: A friend of mine named Mina Vaughn was cast in it, and she told me that they needed another dancer for a scene. She introduced me to the choreographer. That was it. I'm on several posters that were used to promote the film. I still get residuals for it, too.

SC: Did Rock Hudson reveal his sexual orientation to you? What was he like?

Barbara Frederick: He didn't have to. Everyone in Hollywood knew it. He was very sweet, and charming, too.

SC: You were married to Lindsay Crosby, who was the son of Bing. How did you two meet? What was he like?

Barbara Frederick: I met Lindsay at the Moulin Rouge. He was sweet when we met, but he had a lot of demons. He was bipolar, which would've been manageable except that he didn't seek treatment. I admitted him to a hospital in Connecticut where he

could get help without it being public, and he apparently went catatonic for two weeks. He decided to leave the hospital and told me he didn't want to go back. If that wasn't enough to end our marriage, he cheated on me more than once.

SC: Did you ever speak to him again?

Barbara Frederick: Of course. We had a child together. He'd occasionally telephone me at night drunk with nonsense, including the night he got remarried. He said, "I finally met a girl who can tolerate me." He then handed the phone to his new wife, Janet, who awkwardly apologized as Lindsay walked off. He later divorced her and married a woman named Susan. He cheated on both of them, as I remember. It's interesting because his brothers weren't bipolar. It was just him, and possibly his mother [Dixie].

SC: Is there anything that you wish you would've done differently in your career?

Barbara Frederick: I shouldn't have left Hollywood so early, but I was so upset about



Dale J. Missimer, Ransom Callicott, Barbara, and Carl F. Kraatz, Queen of the Home Show 1959



I've always wondered if I'd have gotten that contract if I told him earlier. I don't think it would've mattered because the industry started changing and contracts were being phased out. I suppose I'll never know.

SC: There's been a lot of controversy regarding Bill Cosby and Harvey Weinstein. Was anyone in Hollywood ever inappropriate towards you? What's your opinion of the #MeToo Movement?

Barbara Frederick: There have always been powerful men in Hollywood who thought that they could do anything. It never got in my way. Tony Martin would flirt with me between performances. I used to say to him, "You're married to the most beautiful woman [Cyd Charisse] in the world!" He'd say, "She's not here right now." I always had a choice whether to act on their advances, and I never did. As far as the #MeToo Movement goes, some causes are necessary, but can go farther than they need to.

SC: What advice would you give to anyone who wants to be an actress?

Barbara Frederick: I'd recommend always having a back-up plan. It's great when you get a part, but there are periods where you don't get anything. You've got to have other ways to support yourself.

SC: Would you return to acting if the opportunity arose?

Barbara Frederick: I don't think so. After I left acting, I went to school and got certified to be a biofeedback therapist. I did that for decades until retiring at age 62. I even taught aerobics on the side. One of my students was Jane Fonda. I'll admit that it sometimes crosses my mind to be an extra in films. I have a friend who's older who makes a great living doing that. It's something that I keep in mind.

how things turned out with Lindsay that I wanted to do something else. There was an audition that I had regrets about with 20th Century-Fox. Ben Bard, who's a well-known actor, wanted me to test for a contract with the studio. I auditioned while he built me up to an executive as a Grace Kelly lookalike. It didn't seem to work, as he [executive] said that I'd be difficult to photograph because my jaw was pronounced. It was weeks later that Ben saw me onstage at the Moulin Rouge, starring as Nellie Bly in *Frankie and Johnny*. It was a sexy role that required a lot of dancing. He later said, "If I had known that you were Nellie Bly, I would've built you up differently. Why didn't you tell me you could dance?"